

## Venison recipes

By Richard Blunt

While sitting at my desk working with some venison recipes for this issue, it occurred to me that over the years I have been taking this wonderful meat for granted. Because of my career in the food industry, I have had easy access to venison as well as bear, buffalo, elk, and even rattlesnake. When I decide to include venison as a menu selection, I simply call my supplier and order the desired cuts. Most good deer hunters, of course, just go to their freezers and select the pieces that suit their needs.

My selection is raised on a game farm in New Zealand. I order it and think no more about it. The venison in the hunter's freezer may have come out of the back forty and is part of the continued enjoyment and satisfaction experienced from a successful hunt. But most folks in this country do not have either of these options for obvious reasons—they're not food industry pros and they don't hunt. And that leaves more venison for me. I kind of like that.

During the time when self-sufficiency had real meaning and hunting was more necessity than sport, meats like venison, bear, moose, and wild boar were common on the family dinner table. These meats became so popular they became standard items in markets and restaurants throughout the country. In the late nineteenth century, hunting limits were imposed in an effort to preserve these animals in the wild. Today, venison is considered a real delicacy. Even finding a cookbook that treats it with respect can be difficult.

With this in mind, those fortunate enough to have it available have an opportunity to treat themselves to some good food. Having meat from a clean fast kill that has been properly butchered, chilled, and hung, a hunter can gain the reputation of being a fine cook as well as a good shot. All you need now is a good selection of herbs and spices in your kitchen and the world of gourmet venison dishes is at your fingertips.

Venison is best to eat when the animal is between the ages of one and three. As the animal ages beyond this, the meat becomes tough and should be marinated to achieve best results. Also, venison is a very lean meat and in many recipes it requires larding (adding fat) during cooking to make the meat moist and tender. If you can, arrange for a professional meat cutter to butcher your deer, especially if you want boneless roast and steaks. Watch and ask plenty of questions, and the next time, maybe you can do it for yourself. Ask him to show you how to estimate the animal's age.

Butchering fees vary. My boss and her husband exchange the hide in return for the butchering.

I am going to share three recipes with you. Each will deal with a specific characteristic of the meat. The first is a sausage recipe, the second uses a marinade, and the last omits the use of a marinade and keeps the use of herbs and spices to a minimum to allow you to experience the "true" taste of venison. This way, when you begin creating your own recipes, you will know how the natural taste of the meat contributes to the taste of the finished product. Remember, the younger the animal, the better the meat will taste.

The following sausage recipe demonstrates how versatile venison is and how well its flavor blends with other meats and spices. If you want further details about sausage making, refer to my column in the July/Aug 1993 issue (#22).

### Venison Sausage

#### Ingredients:

6 lbs venison, cut into 1" strips  
2 lbs pork shoulder or butt cut into 1" strips  
½ lb fatty bacon cut into 1" strips  
1½ tsp salt  
2 tsp coriander  
½ tsp mustard seed  
½ tsp basil leaf  
½ tsp garlic powder  
2 Tbsp *freshly* ground black pepper  
1 Tbsp light or dark brown sugar  
½ tsp dried thyme

#### Preparation:

1. After cutting the venison, pork, and bacon, put it back in the refrigerator for a couple of hours. This will chill it to the proper temperature and make it easier to grind.
2. When the meat is chilled, put it through the grinder using the coarse screen, then put it through again using the fine screen.
3. In a large mixing bowl, thoroughly combine the ground meat, the spice mixture, and the salt.
4. To check the flavor, saute a little of the mixture until it is cooked, then taste it and adjust the seasoning if necessary.
5. Cover the sausage and refrigerate it overnight to allow the flavors to penetrate the meat.
6. The next day I stuff it into casings and smoke it. This is the only sausage I make in which I use a sausage casing. If I am not going to smoke it, I poach the sausage in hot water

until it floats. Once cooled, it can be pan fried or broiled (or if you like, it can still be smoked after boiling). I, for one, always smoke mine. If you use a water smoker, add some good beer or ale to the water pan for added flavor.

The next recipe incorporates a marinade that will help tenderize the meat from an older animal and also improve the flavor.

### Roast Leg of Venison

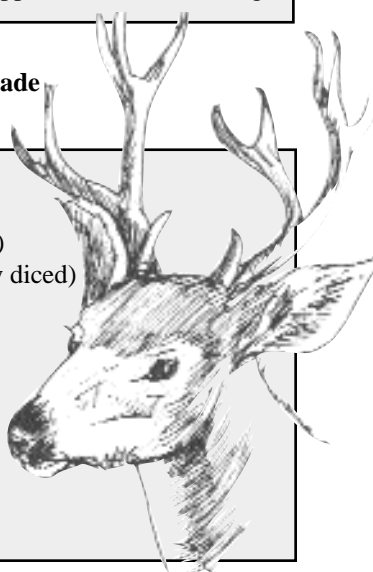
#### Ingredients:

1 leg of venison (about 6 lbs)  
Strips of bacon (enough to cover the leg)  
*Freshly* ground black pepper and salt for rubbing

#### Marinade

#### Ingredients:

2 carrots (diced)  
2 onions (diced)  
2 stalks of celery (diced)  
2 cloves of garlic (finely diced)  
1 tsp dried basil leaf  
1 tsp dried thyme leaf  
½ tsp cayenne pepper  
4 whole cloves  
2 Tbsp Dijon mustard  
4 cups dry red wine  
½ cup vinegar  
½ cup peanut oil



#### Preparation:

1. Season the leg by rubbing it with salt and *freshly* ground pepper.
2. Place the diced vegetables in a large stainless steel or glass bowl and place the leg on top of them.
3. Mix the herbs and spices with the Dijon mustard, red wine, vinegar, and peanut oil. Add this to the bowl. Cover and marinate in the refrigerator for two days, turning occasionally (four to six hours).
4. When marinating is complete, remove the leg and dry it with paper towels. Place the meat on a rack in a suitable roasting pan and cover it with the strips of bacon. Save the remaining marinade to make the sauce.
5. Place the meat in a preheated 400° oven for fifteen minutes, then reduce the oven temperature to 275°. Let it roast, basting frequently with the pan juice. The meat will take about 1¼ hours to reach an internal temperature of 125° (this is if you like your meat rare). If you prefer your meat cooked until it is medium, continue to roast it until the internal temperature reaches 135° to 140°. This will take about

another half hour. If you don't own a meat thermometer, I suggest that you get one; it is the only way I will roast meat.

Set the meat aside on a warm platter for at least fifteen minutes before cutting.

#### Sauce

#### Ingredients:

2 cups of good beef stock  
1 cup reserved marinade  
¼ cup sherry  
3 Tbsp butter or margarine (soft)  
3 Tbsp flour

#### Preparation:

1. Combine the beef stock, marinade, and sherry. Pour this mixture into the roasting pan and mix it with any remaining juices in the pan and use this to rinse the pan. Then pour this mixture into a sauce pan and bring it to a simmer. Continue to simmer until the liquid is reduced to about two cups. Remove from the heat and allow the oil to rise to the surface as the liquid cools and remove as much of it as you can with a ladle or a large spoon.
2. Combine the butter with the flour and mix it until it is well blended. Now return the sauce to the heat and bring it to a simmer again. As it is simmering, add the butter-flour mixture, about one Tbsp at a time, while stirring. Continue until the sauce reaches the desired thickness (about like a thin gravy) and continue to simmer it for about ten more minutes. This continued simmering cooks the flour and gives the sauce a smooth and nonchalky taste. Do not allow the sauce to burn or stick to the bottom of the pot.

The next and last recipe is for those lucky enough to get a young deer. Remember, three years or younger. Ask your butcher to help you to determine the age if you're not sure. If you really like venison, this recipe is even good for older animals.

### Char Broiled Venison Steaks

3 steaks cut to 3/4" thickness (about 2 lbs. of meat)

#### Basting Sauce

#### Ingredients:

1 large clove of garlic  
1 Tbsp Dijon mustard  
½ tsp black pepper (freshly ground)  
½ tsp thyme leaves  
¼ cup butter  
2 tsp soy sauce  
¼ tsp savory leaves

**Preparation:**

1. Place the butter in a pan over a very low heat to melt it. Squeeze the garlic through a garlic press into the melting butter and add the remaining ingredients. Stir and remove from the heat immediately. Do not cook.

2. Brush the steaks with the sauce and allow them to sit for one half hour.

3. Broil over hot coals until they're cooked the way you like them, rare or medium.

Here is an option. After brushing some sauce on the steaks, return the remaining sauce to a low heat and add 3 Tbsp of currant jelly. Stir this until the jelly melts. Just before the steaks are removed from the grill, brush this sauce on both sides, then serve immediately.

You know, it's been so much fun writing this month's column, in the future, I will address other kinds of game including rattlesnake. Δ

**More venison sausages**

*By Bill Palmroth*

Although venison can be used successfully in making many types of sausage, I strongly recommend that venison fat not be used in the sausage. It gives the sausage an off-flavor, does not keep well, and is tallowy when eaten cold. Pork fat is best for ground processed meats because it adds flavor and juice to the meat, keeps well, and is not tallowy when cold. The amount of fat you add to your sausage can vary with taste.

**Basic ground meat mix**

**Ingredients:**

5 lbs. lean venison  
1 lb. pork back fat  
2-4 Tbsp. salt

**Preparation:**

Grind the meat and fat thoroughly, mix in salt, and add one of the seasoning recipes that follow. Keep mixture cold.

The following seasoning recipes are for the above quantities of meat. These are just a few suggested seasoning combinations, and spices may be modified to suit your personal taste. Add seasonings to the basic meat mix and knead like bread until thoroughly mixed. Keep cold at all times.

**Salami seasoning**

2 Tbsp. sugar  
1 Tbsp. cayenne pepper  
1 tsp. ground cloves  
1 Tbsp. fine-ground pepper  
2 tsp. garlic powder  
¾ cup dry milk (mix to a thin paste)

**Sausage seasoning**

2 Tbsp. sugar  
1 tsp. cayenne pepper  
1½ Tbsp. ground chili powder  
1 Tbsp. garlic powder  
1½ tsp. ground celery seed  
¾ cup dry milk (mix to a thin paste)

**Weiner seasoning**

1½ tsp. ground white pepper  
1¼ tsp. ground coriander  
1½ tsp. mustard powder

**Pepperoni seasoning**

2 Tbsp. sugar  
1 tsp. ground cumin  
1¼ tsp. leaf oregano  
1 tsp. thyme  
1 Tbsp. cracked pepper  
1 Tbsp. fine ground pepper  
3 Tbsp. chili powder  
1 tsp. whole anise  
¾ cup dry milk (mix to thin paste)

There are several methods you can use to stuff and cook your meat mixes. You may either purchase casings or use cans to shape the sausage. Dried casing may be ordered from almost any butcher. They come in both large and small sizes. If you use casings, you will need to make them pliable by soaking in a solution of one pint warm water, one Tbsp. of vinegar, and one tsp. salt for three hours. Rinse casings thoroughly before stuffing, then cook using one of the following methods:

**Oven method of cooking:**

Place filled cans or stuffed casings on rack in baking pan and bake at 325 degrees for 1¼ hours. Cool, package and store.

**Smokehouse method of cooking:**

Hang in portable smoker—do not allow sausages to touch each other. Smoke at 160 degrees for about eight hours. Test for doneness (internal temperature should be 165 degrees). Remove from smoker, refrigerate or wrap and freeze.

Personally, I prefer the smoking method over the oven method, because smoke cooking tends to develop more delicate and tantalizing flavors in the sausage. Keep in mind, however, that the flavor of the finished product is governed entirely by the type of wood used for creating the smoke. Dry hardwoods, such as hickory, maple and alder, are necessary for creating the smoke if a palatable flavor is to be developed. This kind of homemade sausage contains no preservatives, so it cannot be treated like store-bought products. It must be frozen if it is to be kept for an extended period of time. It should keep for up to six months in the freezer if sufficiently wrapped.

If you have never tasted deer or elk meat sausage, there is a pleasant surprise in store for you. Δ



**A BHM  
Writer's Profile**

Martin S. Harris, Jr. holds a Master of Fine arts in Architecture and Urban Planning from Princeton University. He is a registered architect, serves in many public service capacities, and is a free-lance writer.

Martin has written articles on a range of building issues for *Backwoods Home* over a period of four years.



**A BHM  
Staffer Profile**

As *Backwoods Home Magazine's* graphics consultant, Bill Mikalson is responsible for turning Don Childers' original art into striking magazine covers. Mikalson admits that his covers are not as good as the originals. Their purpose is not just to look pretty, but also to attract the attention of prospective readers. As many new readers can attest, they work.

Born in 1950 in a small Wisconsin town, William Allen Mikalson grew up in a printing family. At the age of 12, he began his career sweeping up in his parents' printing plant. By the age of 18, his experience included all areas of the industry. He has college degrees in Industrial Technology and Communications, and is an experienced writer and photographer.

Mikalson has managed several printing plants but found he preferred working as an industry consultant. He currently lives and works on a boat in the Caribbean Sea.

